

Submitter: James Impara
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB767

I am writing in favor of SB767.

A clerical error in the original charter school legislation has arguably made it possible for one district to open a new school in another district, with no input or oversight by the district within which the new school will be located. This is inherently unfair, disruptive to the stable delivery of education in Oregon, and not the intent of the original charter school legislation.

It is unfair for one district to construct a school in another district without the approval of the receiving district. Unless the legislation is approved as written, no school district would be safe from another district imposing an unwanted alien educational system on it. An actual building is a completely different order of magnitude than a virtual connection. The physical presence of one district within another demands oversight, control, and a say in the decision making process by the district where the school will be located.

Without approval of SB767, the disruption to the economic control and line of responsibility would threaten the stability of community based public education in Oregon. Every district is responsible of the education of its children. The confusion and inability to affect responsible control within a district if another district can impose its values and system will lead to confusion and lack of accountability. Taxpayers will not be able to elect or reject school board members if they find the out-of -district controlled school offensive and out of step with community educational values.

The impetus for the correction to the charter school legislation is the abuse of my small and vulnerable school district, Pinehurst, by a large California corporation, John Adams Academy. John Adams Academy is looking to leverage our district to implement its larger designs within Oregon. Neighboring and much larger districts are rightfully concerned that a woefully understaffed and financially tenuous school district, like Pinehurst, would have control over how its children are educated. We have about a dozen children attending school within our rural school building. John Adams Academy projects a school population of 1600+ within five years on a campus in another district. The absurdity of the Pinehurst School District overseeing and administrating a 1600 student body campus is obvious. John Adams Academy makes misleading statements as to how our district would benefit by partnering with them; the statements are patently incorrect. Approval of SB767 would protect our school, and other small rural schools around the state, from better funded and staffed, predatory corporations looking for a foothold in Oregon.

The inverse to our situation at Pinehurst is also a danger. A large, financially

endowed corporation with a mission, under the auspices of an Oregon school district, could easily destroy a small school district. The loss of a few students could potentially bring down a financially strapped district. Placing a campus within a district already struggling could be the death knell for any community control or accountability for education of its children.

SB767 is a simple clerical correction to an omission that, if not corrected, will cause problems within communities like mine and our neighbors, and cause problems in communities throughout Oregon.